

## WFWP Stuttgart, Germany held an event to commemorate World Happiness Day

Gabriele Schickert and Ute Lemme

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On 23 March 2019, WFWP Stuttgart/Germany held an event to commemorate World Happiness Day. The event attracted ten participants.

To start off with, we enjoyed refreshments; each person had a wrapped fortune cookie on their plate, and the sayings within were read out loud to all. On this occasion we had two mothers whose three children between the ages of five and six played in the adjoining room.

Gabriele Schickert offered an opening prayer before Ute Lemme spoke about the special topic of the day.

The International Day of Happiness-initiated by Bhutan-was established by the UNO in 2012, and has been celebrated on 20 March every year since.

This day is intended to serve as a reminder as to what happiness and well-being mean in our lives. In Germany, the GHO (Global Happiness Organization) researches happiness, and Eckhardt von Hirschhausen has been appointed as a 'Happiness Promoter'. Two students in Mannheim established the 'Ministry for Happiness and Wellbeing', as an interactive art project. The UN publishes an annual World Happiness Report, where countries are placed on a map of the world in different colors on a scale according to the life satisfaction of their inhabitants. Especially happy are the inhabitants of Finland and Denmark, while those living in the Central African Republic are especially dissatisfied. In 1976 in Bhutan, a country whose government has made it a goal for decades to track the happiness of the inhabitants, the term 'gross national happiness' was coined. As opposed to "gross domestic product" which is purely a material definition, this term includes for example the promotion of culture and religion, protection of the environment and social justice.

Ute Lemme then reported about various conclusions that philosophers, economists, neurologists, brain

researchers and sociologists have reached in their research into happiness. A distinction can be made between 'happiness by chance', 'comfortable happiness' and 'happiness of abundance'. How can happiness be measured? What factors influence happiness? There are many interesting results. Health and education are important, and having a purpose in life goes beyond happiness. What leads to happiness?

Ute gave three examples: Buddhism and meditation; the education of children- citing the example of Denmark (no pressure, using play and the strengthening of self-confidence through praise); and the introduction of 'happiness' as a school subject (first introduced in 2007 in a school in Heidelberg) for competence of life and to encourage development of the personality.

Ute ended by presenting the community of Schömberg in the Black Forest. This community has called itself 'the community of happiness' since 2009 and has put a trademark on this title. Bhutan and Schömberg have been 'partners in happiness' since 2010; we plan a day-excursion to Schömberg in July.

We then took the opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas. One guest from Kashmir gave an example based on her own experience, as to how helping one's fellow men can foster happiness. Thus in 2005 she was able to overcome the trauma that she had experienced in Kashmir in a terrible earthquake with many fatalities, by her decision to actively support the establishment of a local network for help.

We extended an invitation to this lady to tell us more about her country and her life at a WFPW meeting later on this year.

Reported by

Gabriele Schickert and Ute Lemme, WFPW Stuttgart/Germany

(English - Catriona Valenta)